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THE BELEN
(NEW MEXICO)
STORY

by F. Stanley

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The Belen, New Mexico Story

By F. Stanley

BELEN, THIRTY MILES SOUTH of Albuquerque, on the El Paso highway, is six miles from the ruins of Alto, one of the northernmost of the Piros Pueblo Indian villages. A sedentary, semi-civilized, peaceful tribe, the Piros were pushed out of existence by the Apaches, Navajos and other marauders. Hoping for safety in numbers, they abandoned Alto in favor of Pilabo some time before the Europeans came into the area in quest of the Gran Quivira. The Spanish government located a genizaros settlement here as a bulwark against wild tribes, and to lessen the attacks on Albuquerque and Santa Fe. 'Twas soon realized that the genizaros possessed some of the richest bottom land of the Rio Grande Valley, so they petitioned Governor Don Gaspar de Mendoza for a royal grant. In so doing they made it clear that they were within their rights as loyal subjects of the king. A number of the men had given many years of service in the army. The reward for such service was always a parcel of land. Grass was needed for their ever-increasing flocks of sheep. Up to now most settlers grazed their sheep east of the Tome and Valencia areas. There was good grass along the west bank of the Rio Grande. This was the land they wanted.

"Captain Diego de Torres and Antonio de Salazar, and other signers hereto, before the greatness of Your Excellency, with the greatest proper submission, state that whereas we have large families, and having no convenient lands wherewith to support them, and having examined an uncultivated and vacant tract of land at the point of the

Rio Abajo, and being unappropriated, we register the same, and petition for a grant in the royal name of His Majesty, whom God preserve, for the purpose of settling thereupon, there being suitable land for cultivation, and such as is not will answer for pasture grounds for our herds and flocks, which we promise to occupy and settle as required by royal ordinances. The boundaries of which are: on the east the Sandia mountains, on the west the Puerco river, on the north, on both sides of the river, the boundary of the lands of Nicolas Chavez and those of the adjoining settlers of Nuestra Senora de la Concepcion de Tome; on the south the place called Felipe Romero in a direct line until it intersects the boundaries above mentioned, from east to west. Which Your Excellency being pleased to grant to us as requested, without any injury to a third party having a better right, we will settle thereupon as aforesaid. Our petition is not asked in malice but for the purpose of overcoming our difficulties."

Don Gaspar de Mendoza appointed a committee to investigate the matter. It reported no obstacle. The governor granted 121,633 acres. Captain Diego de Torres took possession in the name of all the others on December 9, 1740. The alcalde failed to register the document until January 25, 1742. The new settlement was called Nuestra Senora de Belen (Our Lady of Bethlehem) or simply Belen.

"At this place of Nuestra Senora de Belen, in the jurisdiction of the town of Albuquerque, on December 9, 1740, I, Captain Don Nicolas de Duran y Chavez, senior justice and war captain of said town and jurisdiction, by virtue of the decree of Lt. Col. Dominguez y Mendoza, governor and captain general of this kingdom, promulgated on November 15, last, wherein I am directed to proceed to give royal possession to Captain Diego de Torres, as a representative of all the persons mentioned and signed, in the aforegoing petition, according to the tenor of their petition, a grant is made to them in the name of His Majesty, which decree was published to those adjoining said lands by my order, and there being no objection made to the petition, I proceeded to give possession. Said land being bounded on the

north by those of Captain Don Nicolas de Duray y Chavez; on the south, from the foundation of the house of Felipe Romero; on the west, the Rio Puerco; that portion on the opposite side of the river with the boundary of the settlers of the Purisima Concepcion, and on the east by the Sandia mountains, and on the south by the walls of the house of the aforesaid Felipe Romero, and having examined said boundaries with three attending and instrumental witnesses, according to the law, I took the aforesaid Torres by the hand and walked with him over the lands, and walked with him over the lands, and he cried out in a loud voice, pulled up grass, threw stones, and gave other manifestations which are made and provided in such cases, receiving his possession in the name of His Majesty, quietly and peacefully, with the same boundaries contained in his petition. I directed perpetual landmarks to be established, giving him said lands free and with general pastures, water, watering places, timber, uses and customs, in order that he, his children, heirs, and successors, may enjoy the same without opposition, and this royal possession to be evidence of a sufficient title, and by virtue of which he shall enjoy the same as aforesaid, and in proper order that it may so appear, I place it on record. Bernabe Baca, Baltazar Baca, and those in my attendance being instrumental witnesses, who signed with me as acting judge — Nicolas de Chavez; Jose Miguel de Alvarez y Castillo; Guillermo Saavedra."

The genizaros took alarm at this encroachment upon their domain. They selected Antonio Casasos and Luis Quintana to represent them before the governor. Nor were the Spaniards idle. Torres and Antonio Salazar learned of the delegation and also made a hurried trip to Santa Fe. The governor referred both parties to the viceroy in Mexico City. The viceroy dumped the case back in the lap of the governor. The genizaros told him they were there to stay. Concha made a visit to the place in 1789 and found five hundred and sixty-three persons occupying the genizaros settlement. He reported that forty-six of these were over sixty years of age; two hundred and ninety-seven were married men; thirteen were widows; two hundred and sev-

en were unmarried; five persons were over seventy; eighty-seven of the married women said their husbands were away farming or otherwise employed. Eleven of the men in the village were widowers. He also listed twenty-six maidens, seventy-six girls under ten years of age. Seventy of the genizaros men belonged to the militia and served in Indian campaigns. He said they were better armed than their neighbors. As for the Spaniards living close by, he listed seven over seventy years of age; ninety-two married men; four widowers; forty-seven bachelors; forty-six girls under fourteen; six women over seventy; eighty-four married women; fourteen widows; seventy-eight young women; one hundred and one girls under ten. One hundred of the men in this Belen settlement were enlisted in the militia and owned their own horses and arms used in Indian campaigns.

With the passage of years the genizaros lost their identity and were regarded as vecinos or citizens. By the time New Mexico became part of the Republic of Mexico government officials made no distinction between the two groups. Belen was looked upon as a military outpost or quasi-presidio as early as 1760. A large rancheria of Jicarillas posed a threat when they decided to settle near Sabinal. To ward off any forays by these against the Abajo settlements, soldiers were sent to Belen to train the colonists in the use of arms as well as Indian warfare. Such preparations discouraged the Indians who struck their tents and moved to the Anton Chico area. Water, scarcer than they thought it would be, caused the farmers of Belen to infringe on the water rights of Sabinal. They were also accused of pasturing their flocks in the fields belonging to the people of Sabinal. The people of Sabinal appealed to both alcalde and governor to put a stop to this. They began arming for an attack on Belen. The governor expected a civil war on his hands. To favor one or the other placed him in a precarious situation indeed. Belen insisted it was in the right and instituted court proceedings against Sabinal. The settlers of Sabinal retaliated by moving their flocks to the Belen pastures. Despite the possibility of bloodshed, more settlers moved in from Tome. Wishing no part of the con-

flict, Baltazar Baca petitioned for the San Jose del Encinal Grant near the Laguna Indian Pueblo. The Bacas of Belen must not be confused with the Cabaza de Baca clan of Pena Blanca and Las Vegas. The Belen Bacas gave a governor to New Mexico as did the Chavez family, which actually gave two.

Standard procedure was followed in both sectors with the erection of adobe chapels and moradas. The genizaros were as much at home in their morada as in the other.

Few of the genizaros continued as such, for by 1797 Fray Francisco de Hozia reported one hundred and twenty-four Indians and 1283 Spaniards for Belen. In 1805, Fray Bernal listed one hundred and seven Indians and 1588 Spaniards. Belen was made a partido, both for convenience and to alleviate the burden on Albuquerque. It was also a port of entry for caravans moving south to Parral, El Paso, Chihuahua, Durango and Mexico City. A branch customs house was also established. Although children were baptised in the genizaro chapel as well as the Belen chapel, the records were kept elsewhere. The first recorded baptism for Belen is found in the Isleta register for 1756. The first recorded baptism for the genizaros was that of Matias Hurrieta, January 11, 1756. The first for Belen were Maria Dolores Barrera and Juan Ignacio Barrera. Fray Pascual Sospreda took care of Tome, Sabinal, Isleta and Belen at this time. Fray Cayetano Jose Ignacio Bernal was sent to Belen as first resident pastor on March 1, 1793. The first church was in old town on land now owned by the Manuel O'Neal family. Repairs on the church brought the addition of two towers, a rock base, flat rocks on the roof. It was well protected against Indians, floods, rain, snow and flaming arrows usually shot on roofs in the hopes of penetrating to the twigs, branches and vigas that were combustable.

The original settlers of the village of Belen were Diego Torres y Salazar (more than one of the same name), Pedro Vigil, Miguel Salazar, Juana Teresa Romero, Lugardita Romero, Juan Antonio Salazar, Miguel Salazar, Pablo Salazar, Nicolas Salazar, Manuel Antonio Trujillo, Maria Torres, Salvador Torres, Juan Jose Torres, Tadeo

Torres, Cayetano Cristobal Torres, Diego Torres (2), Barbara Romero, Gabriel Romero, Maria Vigil, Jose Trujillo, Francisco Martin, Nicolas Martin, Ignacio Barrera, Juan Dominguez Torres, Francisco Trujillo, Francisco Giron, Cristobal Naranjo, Jose Antonio Naranjo, Bartolome Torres, Pedro Romero.

Governor pro-tem Antonio Guerrero imposed a levy of oxen and men to be sent to the San Felipe pueblo where a bridge was to be constructed across the Rio Grande. The people of Belen failed to respond, so the governor fined the town, and applied the proceeds toward maintaining friendly relations with the Apaches in the jurisdiction of Belen. The change of allegiance from Spain to Mexico had little outward effect on Belen save for an occasion for celebrating with a fiesta and a fandango. The year 1825 proved to be a particularly prosperous one for Belen, and the Mexican government asked a contribution from every family for the good of the Republic. The colonists put down the names of each family visited. Such a list is helpful in tracing ancestry as well as for geneological reasons. The family tree is always a good topic of conversation when the party gets dull. These were the homes visited: Antonio Chavez, Antonio Jose Chavez, Juan Geronimo Torres, Manuel Chavez, Jose Montoya, Francisco Pino, Jose Toribio Trujillo, Juan Jose Baca, Juan Cruz Baca, Antonio Ortiz, Juan Gutierrez (El Chico), Lorenzo Salas, Miguel Abeitia, Juan Galbadon, Rafael Galbadon, Roque Galbadon, Luciano Sedillo, Enrique Chavez, Francisco Jose Luciano Chavez, Jose Antonio Velesquez, Antonio Chavez, Rafael Chavez, Nicolas Chavez, Loronzo Chavez, Antonio Jose Chavez, Antonio Chavez (2), Antonio Jose Velasquez, Jose Maria Torres, Mariano Aragon, Rafael Garcia, Salvador Jaramillo, Francisco Luna, Pedro Luna, Juan Antonio Torres, Pedro Castillo, Antonio Jose Castillo, Joaquin Castillo, Juan Jose Baca, Vicente Baca, Ramon Silba, Vicente Chavez, Antonio Barreras, Pedro Maestas, Felipe Silba, Rafael Galbadon, Antonio Jose Gallegos, Juan Esteban Torres, Pedro Galendo, Rafael Cordova, Pablo Trujillo, Juan Baca, Francisco Padilla, Jose Pino, Manuel Jaramillo, Ramon Torres, Jose Maria Cha-

vez, Francisco Pacheco, Manuel Pacheco, Pablo Silba, Onofio Jose Apodaca, Manuel Contreras, Manuel Gutierrez, Roque Griego, Tomas Baca, Cristobal Garcia, Ramon Armijo, Juan Antonio Armijo, Manuel Ballegos, Jose Ribera, Vicente Trujillo, Juaquin Ulibarri, Pablo Lucero, Jose Antonio Garcia, Manuel Martin, Jose Manuel Silva, Francisco Gurule, Salvador Giron, Laurino Sanchez.

"About a league downstream (from Pajarito)," wrote Fray Francisco A. Dominguez in 1776, "to the south, some widely separated ranches began, located all over the river meadow downstream. They belonged to a settlement of ranchos called Belen which is opposite Tome, six leagues from the mission. It lies on the river meadow mentioned so many times. It has good farmlands, which are irrigated from the said river, and they yield very good and copious crops of everything. The individuals are like those everywhere, not to be boring, and here is their census: Ninety-six families with five hundred and ninety-three persons. In this Belen there is a group of genizaros like those at Santa Fe. (The genizaros settlement at Belen became known as Los Jarales). Some of them have small plots of arable land, and others have nothing, supporting themselves as their luck helps them (Only they and God know whether they have managed to get their hands on what belongs to their neighbors.) Here is their census: Forty-nine families with two hundred and nine persons. Four leagues down the road to the south of this place, on the same meadow, is a settlement of ranches like the above. It is called Sabinal and is ten leagues from the mission. Their lands are good, even better than those of Belen. They are irrigated with the aforesaid river and yield proportionate crops and harvests. The individuals are like all the rest and here is their census: Fifty-one families with two hundred and fourteen persons." (See: Adams, Fray Chavez MISSIONS OF NEW MEXICO).

Since the prisoners of the ill-fated Texas-Santa Fe Expedition marched south on the east side of the Rio Grande at this point, they failed to see Belen. No doubt many citizens crossed over to see the Texans to bring them food

for it was learned that they were starving. Santa Fe traders often stopped by with merchandise not sold at Taos, Albuquerque or Tome. Trains left Belen with hides and wool to be sold at El Paso, Parral and Chihuahua. Mutton, dried beef, chili, onions and beans were taken to Bernalillo, Acoma, Laguna, Socorro in trade for wine, grapes and other commodities.

Padre Vicente Chavez replaced Fray Juan Bruno, the last Franciscan to administer the Belen parish. This was in May, 1826. Bishop Juan Antonio Zuburia was given a royal welcome in Belen on August 14th, the eve of the patronal feast of the church. There were luminaries, vespers, processions, dances, for few, if any, had ever seen a bishop. The two fiesta days in Belen were August 15 and December 25. Several delegations consulted him about a school, church activities and obligations. He admonished Padre Luis Lujan about the church records. They were ill kept. Juan Cristobal Chavez spoke of a chapel dedicated to Nuestra Senora del Refugio which he was anxious to build on his Suazal ranch. The bishop told him he would think about it. Actual permission in writing did not arrive until November 9, 1850, after New Mexico had passed into American hands. It was agreed that Sauzal was far enough away from Belen to permit the people in that area to attend this chapel. Later Padre Eguillon thought it advisable to move the chapel from Sauval to La Ladrea where it would be more centrally located. After the turn of the 20th century, the chapel was moved a third time to the village of Castillo. During the Rebellion of 1837 a number of soldiers from Belen enlisted under the banner of Manuel Armijo.

Rev. Josef Machebeuf, the frail Frenchman, thought too puny for the hardships of American missions, served as pastor of Belen from April to November, 1853. He was alarmed at the devastation of the Rio Grande flood waters and the harm to the church. When Rev. Anthony Juillard came as pastor in 1855, one of his first official acts was to follow the advice of Bishop Lamp, who held Confirmations in Belen on June 27th, and build a new church away from the unpredictable, often rampaging, Rio Grande. The bishop

was annoyed by the fact that when he made a visit to the padre in May, part of the tower fell too close for comfort. It was not a very enjoyable visit. If there was any doubt about the need for a new church, it was dissipated when another flood completely demolished the building during the summer of that year.

Work on the new church began in September, 1858, a crucial time, for the air was full of war talk and recruiters were stirring about to complete the ranks of the New Mexico Militia. Perea, Baca and others sought regiments that would be ready when the time was ripe. Despite this channeling of manpower, Padre Eugenio Paulet found a sufficient number willing and able to raise a new edifice. He even sold the old trees that grew in front of the old church to help with the funds for the new. He bought two six-shooters to stave off those too anxious for the lumber and vigas of the old, and the die-hards ready to give their life's blood rather than see the church in a new location. Despite the turmoil between parishioners about the old and the new, Bishop Lamy blessed the new building on November 19, 1860. Juan Cristobal Chavez, Juan Cruz Baca, prime movers in pushing the construction, were named mayordomos and each given a family pew as a token of esteem and gratitude. Francisco Aragon of Jarales was accorded the same honor for the same reason. Jarales was no longer considered the abode of the genizaros. The bell for the church was carted in via the Santa Fe Trail.

Col. E. R. S. Canby set up a reserve camp at Belen. He addressed a letter to the adjutant general of the army January 11, 1862, giving his reasons: "I left Fort Craig," he wrote, "on January 6, with a light battery, three companies of cavalry, three of infantry (regulars), and four of infantry (volunteers), and have established a reserve camp at this place, with the regular troops, the volunteers having been sent back to Fort Craig to escort wagon trains on the road to that place. The valley of the Rio Grande can be reached from the Pecos by the Abo, Manzano and Galisteo Passes. This point is above the Abo Pass, and is centrally located and conveniently situated for the concentration of

troops to meet an enemy approaching from the Pecos by either of the above routes or if the main demonstration should be against Fort Craig, with the entire force in that direction. All the different approaches to the country are closely watched by scouts and spies, and I have no apprehension of the approach of the enemy without receiving several days notice. The available force in this part of the Department, about 1500 men, can be concentrated at this place in about twenty-four hours."

Canby was still at Belen several weeks later when he received word that the Confederates from Texas were moving against Fort Fillmore and Fort Craig. A rumor circulated that the army payroll had been held up at Fort Leavenworth and Canby feared a revolt from the regulars and volunteers at Belen. Trouble was stirred up at Fort Union and Polvadera but the troops in Belen remained steadfast. Taking the 1500 men, Canby moved south to meet the Confederates at Valverde. After the engagement, the wounded from both sides were cared for in make-shift hospitals in Socorro, Belen and Polvadera. The Confederates entered Belen on March 1, 1862, on the way to the supply depot at Albuquerque. The citizens of Belen were grateful that they did not sack the town. Some stragglers returned after Peralta and Glorieta, were fed and clothed and sent on their way back to Texas. After that Belen settled back to normal, the Indians inflicting the damage expected of the Confederates.

The California Column was cheered in passing. Word of the Bosque Redondo project was received with mixed emotions. The Navajos, supposedly confined at the Bosque, staged a raid on Belen carrying off sheep, horses, goats, women and children. The men of Belen retaliated with a counter-raid, took captives, and traded them for the ones snatched by the Navajos. Actually the prisoners proved a liability, for General Carleton sent soldiers after the Navajos to dog their steps and hound them out of their hiding places. An official report dated March 12, 1864, makes mention of one such incident: "Indians captured near Sabinal 2,300 head of sheep; were followed by (New) Mexicans

who re-captured them on the night of the 12th or 13th." After the war Sherman permitted the Navajos to return to their own country.

Shortly after the above events, John Becker came to Belen. A postoffice was established and he was recognized as first official postmaster. Up to this time Belen had been a sub-station out of Los Lunas, although mail had been deposited in Belen as early as 1821 when Tome was a post-office during Mexican Republic days. Scholle, Becker, Goebel and Chavez opened mercantile stores. The railroad brought new life to Belen. Citizens complained that the mail service was no better now that the railroad had arrived. One citizen said:

"This morning (November 27, 1880) for the first time since the railroad passed here, the NEW MEXICAN (newspaper) came in two days from Santa Fe. Letters from St. Louis, Missouri, arrived this morning dated the 21st. Some Santa Fe dates were Nov. 13th to 24th, and it is six hours by rail from Santa Fe to Belen. John Becker, merchant and postmaster here, brings the mail from the depot, one mile away, at his own expense, no provision being made by the government, still there are seven houses here which depend almost entirely upon the promptness of the wool, hide and pelt reports for their profits. The houses of Felipe Chavez and Manuel A. Otero receive, if received, ten to forty letters daily. This reprehensible, and in no manner inexcusable, state of affairs is a death blow to our progress. Prospectors who are opening mines around here are damning the mail service and swear they will leave the country unless they can get word from assays sent off and from their families and correspondents. There is no question about it: there is some very, very bad management. Ten to fifteen days from Santa Fe to Belen, New Mexico, is too transparent a case of criminal negligence of duty. The thing is, who is to blame? Today the mail pouch was not taken off the train. Ox carts would be an improvement on the new railroad service."

Although an "end of track" town, Belen never acquired the notorious characters that plagued Las Vegas, Albuquer-

que, Dodge and other places popularized on stage and screen. Oddly enough, the wild breed were more active during the days of the "cut-off" rather than during these days when gun play was the rule rather than the exception. A new town moved gracefully along with the old. Now and then a trigger happy individual disturbed the peace of the town.

"Night before last," wrote the editor of the paper, November 22, 1880: "occurred the first shooting affair which has taken place here for years. On November 20, Damasio Baca and his brother Santiago went into S. Hurschberg's store and began a tirade of abuse directed at the proprietor and his clerks. They were both very drunk at the time, and it was with difficulty that they were induced to leave the store. This was finally accomplished, and the two men, still very angry, went away with drawn revolvers. After this they went to the house of John Becker, evidently bent on mischief. When they arrived there they almost immediately attacked Adam Zeigler, proprietor of the Railroad Hotel at Los Lunas. A struggle ensued during which Ziegler received several blows, after which he went to the store and walked behind the counter. The infuriated Baca brothers followed him and drew their revolvers on him. Whereupon Ziegler seized a Springfield rifle and shot Santiago Baca through and through. The same ball which passed through the body of Santiago, as if unsatisfied with its work of death, sped on and pierced the left arm of Damacio, thus disabling both immediately to such an extent that the difficulty was at an end as soon as it had done its mission. Santiago walked to one corner of the store where he fell and expired immediately. A jury of inquest was summoned and an examination into the case took place with Hon. Felipe Chavez acting as foreman of the jury. After hearing the evidence in the case, the jury returned a verdict of justifiable homicide and that ended the case. Ziegler is still confined to his bed, so is Damacio Baca."

"A great ball was given by Vicente M. Baca as an opening to his wholesale business and leaves a memory of the finest and best attended party that has taken place in New

Mexico for years, if indeed it was ever equaled in the Territory. The large room, 75 by 33 within walls, accommodating 275 dancers at a time, was full to overflowing. Fully 500 ladies and their escorts attended. The dance went merrily through all the fantastic changes. Decorum, courtesy, faultless order and uninterrupted pleasure characterized the night of the opening. Mr. Baca and his wife, nee Miss Chavez, daughter of Felipe Chavez, entertained with dignified ease. Romaldo Serna was chief floor manager, with Jose Antonio Baca assistant. Very many of the belles of Belen and Valencia county were present. The wines were of the best, and with other refreshments were nicely served. Among those present were Hon. Felipe Chavez and family, Epimnio Tafoya and wife, Manuel Baca and wife, S. H. McDemot and wife, of Detroit, Michigan, A. Meyer of Spiedelburg Bros., Valentin Alderdo and family, Ignacio Baca and family, J. Jaramillo y Miera and wife, Frederick Becker and lady, Paul Isaac and lady, Juan Sanchez and lady, J. Trujillo and wife, J. W. Green, Pablo Chavez, Jose Salas and family, Frederick Scholle, Luther Boebiel, Senoritas Augustina Serna, Espiridona Serna, Zenida Sanchez, Beatriz Chavez, Josefa Baca, and too many others to mention. Within a few days this great hall where decorour pleasure under the sway of sweet music, lovely senoritas, and diamonds and other jewelry flashed, will be the well stored wholesale house of Vicente Baca. It will be the largest and most complete central wholesale house of New Mexico. It is in the heart of the great valley, the widest on the Rio Grande.

"A bridge and toll road is being arranged for under the incorporation laws of New Mexico. The bridge is to span the Rio Grande. The road portion is for constructing a new permanent wagon track through the Abo Pass, thus making the large, ancient mining towns of Punta de Agua and Manzano as well as two score of smaller towns nearer to Belen by thirty miles at the present time, and affords a far better and much shorter road to Fort Stanton and all the eastern and central portions of Lincoln county. This will give fifty percent more wool, hide and pelt trade to Belen than

it now enjoys, and correspondingly an increase in its retail trade. It will make large tracts of pine timber, twenty miles northeast of here, available along the Rio Grande, and at railroad towns for a distance of sixty miles. Already a multitude of nightly campfires blaze along the Manzano mountains, from Hell Canyon to Abo Pass and further south. They tell of the patient, industrious prospectors who are opening the vaults where the gold dust shines.

"A police meeting was held yesterday forenoon in the warehouses of Felipe Chavez for the purpose of organizing a police force. John Becker, L. H. Hunning, F. Scholle, V. M. Baca, A. H. McDermot, G. Hirschberg, who but a few months since established a commercial house here, are the leaders to this preventative to disturbance."

The town did not grow fast despite new roads, stores, bridges. The directory for 1903 listed the population at about fifteen hundred. The Fulton Market, which sold groceries and meats, was owned by Monahan & Sprague; Particio Galbadon was in the sheep business; Oscar Goebel had a mercantile store and a hotel; Federico Gonzolez operated a saloon; Alfred Jordan also had a saloon; Landach & Derick owned the Cutoff Saloon; Rev. Ritcher was the pastor of the Lutheran church; W. D. Metzgar managed a saloon for Melini & Eakin; W. C. Noble also owned a saloon; D. W. Randcilffe was the town doctor; Charles Raff was the blacksmith, wagonmaker and carriage painter; Victor Saiz was in the sheep business; Fred Scholle had a mercantile store and did business in wool, hides and sheep; Wm. M. Berger was the editor of the Belen newspaper known as THE VALENCIA COUNTY EXPRESS; L. C. Wardwell owned the livery stable; Bow Wing had a restaurant; O. M. Ziegler was agent at the Santa Fe depot for Wells Fargo; E. Baca ran a saloon; D. Baca had a sheep business; Saturino Baca was sheriff; Venceslado Baca was the Justice of the Peace; F. A. Becker was the operator for the Santa Fe Railroad; John Becker was president of the John Becker Company. This included a mercantile store, wool, farm implements, roller mills, Belen Town & Improvement. William Berger was secretary and manager of the John Becker enterprises.

W. L. Brun was the town baker; Jose F. Castillo was a sheep rancher; H. E. Berger owned a livery stable; Pablo Castillo was a sheep rancher; Roman Castillo was a sheep rancher; Felipe Chavez was listed as a capitalist; Silverio Chavez was a sheep rancher. Mrs. Brun owned the Commercial Hotel; P. B. Dalies was the vice-president of the J. Becker Company; Louis Deen owned a restaurant; George Everett was the town jeweler; M. W. Flournay was president of the First National Bank; R. A. Frost was the bank cashier. Becker Avenue in Belen honors John Becker.

Manuel Garcia, who got his start in the business world as a clerk for Becker-Dalies Co., also worked for a time for the Santa Fe Railroad. For twenty-eight years he, in partnership with his brother, Jose, also of Belen, operated a general merchandise store at Belen and another at Jarales. He owned the flour mill at Jarales besides a food market on South Second Street in Albuquerque. When Belen incorporated as a city he served as its second mayor. He also served as postmaster for eighteen months. He was deputy sheriff from 1908 to 1938, and under sheriff from 1938 to 1942. During the years 1945 and 1946 he was city policeman. His wife was from Quemado, New Mexico. He died of a heart attack at Hot Springs, New Mexico, shortly before his 74th birthday.

Carl A. Dalies the son of a Lutheran clergyman, was born in Menominee Falls, Wisconsin, December 5, 1875. After a short stay in Ripon and Racine, Carl decided to come to Belen to enter the employ of his uncle, John Becker. In 1900 he was elected a member of the thirty-fifth assembly of the Territory of New Mexico. Later Governor Otero appointed him a member of the Territorial Irrigation Commission. He became a partner in the Becker enterprises which merged as the Becker-Dalies Company.

One of the attractions of Belen is the white carrara marble and red sandstone mausoleum of Don Jose Felipe Chavez, designed by Angelo de Tullio, an Albuquerque architect. It was erected shortly after the death of Josefita Chavez on January 22, 1899. It contains the remains of Don Felipe (he was never known as Jose), Josefita, Manuel-

ita and two other children. Chavez was a banker, sheepman, merchant, landlord. In 1946, to widen the entrance to the church, the mausoleum was re-built to the left of the church without disturbing the resting places of the deceased. This eliminated obscuring a complete view of the front of the church.

The Belen Cutoff of the Santa Fe Railroad had been contemplated from the earliest days, even before the company entered New Mexico. Lewis Kingman was the only surveyor who mapped a proposed route into Belen. This map was destroyed in the fire of 1899. Santa Fe went along with the ideas of the other engineers until it purchased the Pecos Valley & Northeastern from Amarillo through Texico. Other railroads promised to beat the Santa Fe into Belen along this southward route. F. M. Jones was sent to investigate the possibility of a route from Clovis to Belen. The survey he came up with called for a junction at Portales rather than Texico. The final plan, as it is today, was completed in December, 1902. Lantry & Sharp of Kansas City received the contract by the bricklaying did not begin until 1906. The Belen Cutoff became the Santa Fe's transcontinental line, thus eliminating the wear and tear on the engines coming over the Raton Pass. It also helped the railroad to double-track from central Kansas to Belen. Mrs. Laura Becker and Mrs. Clara Dalies welcomed the work of the cutoff route. A small adobe Lutheran church had been constructed near the Goebel store. Becker, Dalies, Scholle were Lutherans. Rev. J. Rouff rode in from Mountainair to take care of the Methodists of Belen. The Simmons, Campbells and Byers were Methodists. Rev. Guy Cox, the Lutheran minister, came to New Mexico for his health. He ended up building a small Methodist church practically single-handed. Adobe bricks made up the pews. Laura Zinth was a zealous church worker for the Lutheran church. She was bookkeeper for the John Becker Company. It was quite a change from Wisconsin, yet she braved the walk home every night, for she always worked until 9 p.m., passing thirteen saloons on the way. Work on the Cutoff brought in professional gamblers, con men, ladies of easy virtue, gun-

men, toughs. She lived with her sister. Later she married Louis C. Becker, cashier at the First National Bank.

In order to help the church, the sisters and other members of the Ladies Aid Society put on a box supper. They were surprised when some of the toughs, cowboys, gamblers bid as high as ten dollars a box in order to help the church. The supper was held in the Heyday Club building. Bertha Rutz, who opened a hotel when construction on the Cutoff began, cooked an oyster stew, something the men in the long line of bunk cars did not have for ages. The ladies raised five hundred dollars on the stew supper. Paul Dalies, Clara's husband, who had witnessed the construction of the Lutheran church in 1904, asked Rev. Mathieson, Presbyterian circuit-rider, to look in on the Lutherans when he came to Belen, and give them some spiritual comfort. The new Lutheran church was dedicated in 1911; the old one was converted into a residence. Many say that Becker & Dalies were the guns behind the move that induced Santa Fe to build the Cutoff. The railroad payroll did climb to $2,280,-000 a year, no matter who was responsible.

In time the little city was able to maintain a fine modern hospital, Welfare buildings, a City Hall, the Art Goebel Airport and the North Belen Airport. The government established a Conservancy District here in 1933. The Santa Fe built a round-house, shops, a large coaling station, yards, and a hundred ton ice plant at Belen. The ice plant was constructed at a cost of $150,000. In 1912 Saturino Baca started a newspaper he called the HISPANO-AMERICANO. Later he founded another called the BELEN NEWS for the English speaking. J. Runyon, father of the more famous Damon Dunyon, founded the BELEN TRIBUNE in 1906. The plant burned to the ground six months later. In 1925 Baca's two papers combined as one. Belen sought, without success, to have the county seat moved from Los Lunas to Belen. The fight was long and bitter. Fire destroyed the courthouse in Los Lunas in August, 1912, and the blame was laid at the door of these fighting Belenites anxious for a change. Nothing came of it, however, for not one could prove this as a motive for destroying the county records. Belen sent sol-

diers to the Spanish-American War as well as to both World Wars and the so-called Korean Police Action. The Public Library was opened in 1929 by the Women's Club. The Episcopalians, Christian Church and other denominations also established in Belen. The Servite Fathers from Chicago took over the Catholic Church in 1927 and have been there ever since. Through the influence of Rev. Raymond Coughlin, O.S.M., a new $87,000 convent was erected in 1958 for the Dominican Sisters teaching at the large parochial school. The public school system of Belen ranks among the highest in the State.

John Becker, life-blood of the new Belen, was a native of Hanover, Germany. Born May 28, 1850, he came to the United States when he was eighteen years of age. He came to New Mexico in 1871, working as a clerk for Louis H. Huning in his Los Lunas store. He was given charge of the Belen branch in 1873. Five years later he entered business for himself. Besides his interests in Belen, he also became vice-president of the Magdalena bank, and president of the Becker-Mactavish Company in Magdalena. His wife's maiden name was Anna Vielstich. Becker was loved by his employees because of his fairness. He was in advance of his time because he gave his employees substantial stock interests in the company.

The population of Belen today is over five thousand and is on the increase with new housing and new developments. Jarales, about four milės away, is also growing. The population is close to a thousand. Every acre of the 121,633 acre land grant is bubbling with a story of its own, and makes the people of Belen proud of their heritage. It is not the biggest town in New Mexico, but one that is often heard from in State Fairs, and other events. Many of the boys from Belen were at Guadalcanal, Bataan and Pearl Harbor.